



# Water Quality NewsFlash

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**Sediment Quality Objectives (SQO) – Proposal to be released this year** – At a workshop on July 6, 2005, State Water Resources Control Board staff presented the annual update on the effort to develop contaminant standards for sediments at the bottom of waterways. These standards would be used in a similar manner to water quality standards. They would be the basis for determining the need for remediation of bottom sediments contaminated by stormwater runoff, industrial and sewage discharges, and other sources. Several contaminated sediment sites are on the 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies.

Unlike water quality, the federal government has never developed recommended sediment quality criteria nor identified a methodology for the development of sediment objectives. This is partially because of the difficulty of determining whether the pollutants in the sediment are bioavailable (i.e., actually capable causing toxicity to fish or bottom dwelling organisms). Bioavailability is also an issue in determining water quality standards, but is an even greater problem in sediments as the sediment matrix itself strongly influences the toxicity of the pollutants. Furthermore, it has been very difficult to identify a relationship between the total concentration of a chemical or group of chemicals and sediment toxicity.

Due to time constraints, the initial set of proposed objectives will address only marine bays. These proposed objectives will rely on a combination of three lines of evidence: 1) lab tests for toxicity, 2) levels of pollutants known to cause toxicity, and 3) the in-place health of organisms living in the sediment. The proposed objectives also take into consideration bioaccumulation and the resultant human health impacts.

When finally promulgated, the standards will most likely result in an increase in Regional Board initiatives to clean up sediments. The State Board plans to circulate a Staff Policy Summary in early August and a draft Functional Equivalent Document (similar to an environmental impact report) by the end of the year. Posted at: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/bptcp/sediment.html>

In related news, the San Diego Board's proposed *Cleanup and Abatement Order* for San Diego Bay sediments has been delayed. The estimated \$96 million enforcement action targets shipyards as well as other parties including the City of San Diego, which discharges urban runoff to the affected area (See *NewsFlash* 05-20). In this action, the Regional Board proposes setting cleanup objectives at 5 times background levels. In a novel approach, the Board staff involved in the effort will be divided into two teams: one team will document the justification for the cleanup while the other team will act as impartial advisors to the Board members. News article:

[http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050630/news\\_1m30nassco.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050630/news_1m30nassco.html) ; Related SD Board documents: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/programs/shipyards/Shipyard%20Sediment%20Cleanup/r9-2005-0126.html>

**Construction Project Compliance – EPA issues MYER Guide** – The U.S. EPA has just published *Managing Your Environmental Responsibilities: A Planning Guide for Construction and Development (the MYER Guide)*. The guide contains sets of questions and checklists designed to be useful for assigning responsibility for each of the federal environmental programs that may apply – hazardous wastes, stormwater, dredge/fill, endangered species, etc. Posted at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/assistance/sectors/constructmyer.html>

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, [Betty\\_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov) (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, [fkrieger@msn.com](mailto:fkrieger@msn.com) with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>